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To damon_doumlele@nps.gov

cc

Subject From NPS.gov: Moving Monroe Station Trailhead to
Monument Lake - Opposed

Email submitted from: sdeline@comcast.net at </bicy/parkmgmt/orv-advisory-committee.htm>

Mailing Address

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It has come to my attention that a proposal has been made to move the Turner River ORV access trail from Monroe Station to Monument Lake Camp ground.

I think it is a good idea to provide ORV access from Monument Lake Camp ground, as it was a traditional ORV trail head and parking area for many years, prior to the forming of the Big Cypress National Preserve. It served in that capacity after the forming of the BICY, until development as a NPS camp ground created user conflict and it was closed to ORV users. When ORV trailhead access was allowed at Monument Lake, ORVs traveled on the shoulder of US-41 to go to and from Monroe Station and Loop Road (94)

That being said, Monroe Station must remain as a ORV parking area and trailhead for access to the Turner River Unit. Monroe Station is also a trailhead location for the Stairstep Unit. Monroe Station has a tradition of providing services to the Gladesmen Culture and provided trailhead access to the Big Cypress since the Tamiami Trail (US 41) was constructed in 1925. While the development of the BICY Commercial Plan has designated Monroe Station as an outfitter location and the Department of Transportation has provided grant money to refurbish Monroe Station, those designations should not result in the closing of the Monroe Station location to the traditional ORV use. The size of the Monroe Station site allows adequate room to allow ORV parking and trail access with out causing user conflict. The ORV parking can be in South and East area of the site, with tow vehicle access from Loop Road. This will keep the outfitter parking area in front of the building (North side) with no need to mix users creating conflict. There is adequate room on the east end of the site to provide for ORVs crossing the Tamiami Trail to the ORV trail head without conflict with outfitter traffic.

The person proposing moving the Trailhead location seems to be under the assumption that all ORVs are trailered or should be, to a trail head. That is not the case in that the Everglades Conservation and Sportsman Club, (established in 1950), a recognized Gladesmen Culture site, has traditionally accessed the Big Cypress Swamp from the Club grounds and do not trailer

ORVs to the trailheads. While the NPS has attempted to gain control of Loop Road in Collier County and control of US 41, thereby allowing cutting off ORVs access using that right of way to travel to trailheads, the NPS has been unsuccessful in those endeavors. In the case of US-41, which is a major thoroughfare between the West coast of Florida and the East coast (Miami), the NPS will never get control of US-41 from the State Department of Transportation. Since the NPS has tipped their hand on how they will treat the Gladesmen Culture and use of ORVs, when they closed the Loop Road portion in Monroe County to ORVs, The Gladesmen will fight any NPS attempt of gaining control of Loop Road or any county road in Collier County.

While there is a State Law that prohibits traveling more then ½ mile on the shoulder of a road, this law has been very infrequently enforced in the Big Cypress Swamp. This law is only enforced in the Big Cypress by the Florida Highway Patrol and the Collier County Sheriff Department. Both of those agencies are rarely in the Big Cypress Swamp, unless there is a crash or a reported crime. These agencies priorities are not in enforcing the law prohibiting driving more then a mile on the shoulder of a road. The NPS enforcement rangers, being federal officers cannot enforce state traffic laws. The net result of this is that if the Monroe Station trailhead is relocated to Monument Lake, ORVs will travel on the US-41 right of way to get to the Monument Lake trailhead. This will create a greater risk of ORV and street Vehicle conflicts then a trailhead crossing of US-41 at Monroe Station.

From a safety standpoint it makes no sense to relocate the trailhead from Monroe Station to Monument Lake. I therefore oppose moving the Monroe Station trailhead to Monument Lake.

Sincerely,

Steven B. DeLine

BigCypressSwamp.com